Organic grain buyers turn to imports to meet demand
By Kevin Hurlbut

While the demand for organic feed continues to grow, the U.S. market has seen an increase in imported organic corn and soybeans. While many people question the integrity of this product, it does have to comply with NOP standards. Imports have been part of the market for a few years, but have flooded the market in the past year. Feed mills on the east and west coast, along with Midwest mills have increased their usage. Since there is not enough organic corn and soybeans grown here in the United States, buyers had no other alternative but to find different avenues for grain.

While organic corn and soybeans are still sold at a very high premium to the conventional price, many producers have seen much lower prices than the $10-12/bushel price for organic grain buyers are purchasing more imported corn and soybeans to meet record demand for organic livestock feed.

Back in the summer of 2012, the price of domestic organic corn traded as high as $17/bushel. Demand was growing at a much faster pace than what U.S. producers could supply. The strength of the U.S. dollar also is playing an impact in the cheaper price of imports. While the dollar continues to be strong, we could see the price of domestic organic corn trade under $8/bushel.

Since the organic market has become more global, we continue to try to push for a price premium for domestic grown product. While most mills would much rather use domestic products, running their businesses and being competitive will have an impact on their decision making. While imports seem like they are here to stay, the strength of the dollar in the coming years will play a pivotal role in how these imports are priced.

Organic imports hurt U.S. organic grain producers
By John Bobbe

During the third week in May, the Nakagawa docked on Lake Michigan in Indiana with a cargo of 450,000 bushels of “organic” corn from a Turkish port. Additional ships docked on the East Coast with similar grain cargos, pouring up to 1.2 million bushels of corn into the U.S. organic market. This amounts to the equivalent of 336 rail cars of organic grain.

Record import volumes of soybeans and corn for the past 18 months have had a devastating effect on U.S. organic grain farmers. A high Dollar Value Index, much less expensive shipping costs for ocean-going cargo, and the willingness of U.S. feed and food manufacturers to source the cheapest ingredients regardless of origin, have created a price structure we haven’t seen since 2009-2010.

Romania and Turkey are the top two exporters of organic corn to the U.S. In the first six months of 2016 compared to the same time period in 2015, corn exported to the U.S. from Romania declined by about 50 percent from $28.4 million to $13.9 million. However, the exports from Turkey to the U.S. went from $11.7 million to $68.6 million, a six-fold increase. (Source: USDA Economic Research Service)

Organic soybean import data tells a similar story. In the first six months of 2016, the dollar value of soybeans imported from Turkey has been 30 times greater than a similar period for 2015 ($1.4 million vs. $51.4 million). India is the number one exporter, Ukraine comes in second, followed by Turkey at number six.

The volume of imports has impacted the entire organic grain market. Feed-grade wheat, corn and soybean markets have dropped as much as $6 a bushel (50 percent) from where they were 18 months ago. Feed-grade grains have fared no better, with prices falling similar amounts for the major grains and $2-$3 on small grains. Low corn and soybean prices have also stifled a once-bustling small grain feed business, causing large backlogs of oats.

NOP Organic grain marketer Tim Boortz notes that imported grains have been a part of the overall bushels used in the production of U.S. organic products for some time now, but there has been a sharp rise in imports this year. Boortz thinks corn has been most affected, with the imports causing slow movement and unacceptable (low) prices. At the end of August, tons of thousands of bushels of grain were unsold. U.S. corn inventory remains in bins across the Midwest.

Organic corn was $12 a bushel 18 months ago. Now it’s $7.50-$8 with some offers to buy as low as $6—that’s a 33-50 percent drop in prices for U.S. producers. This price scenario is not going to grow the domestic industry when cost of production is $10-$10.50 per bushel.

This influx of imported grain is concerning not only for its economic impact, but also because of its questionable origin. In a recent report, the USDA’s Foreign Agricultural Service stated, “As organic production and consumption in Turkey grow, so, too, do the concerns about fraudulent organic products and lack of inspections.” According to a Europol report, some Turkish companies have been involved in relabeling or repackaging products as organic and bringing the counterfeit products into the European Union, even though the products do not meet the organic standards. Reports from the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture (FiBL) in 2015, Eurofins Scientific in 2012, the Cornucopia Institute in 2013 and the French Ministry of the Economy in 2015...
What defines MOSES?

When I managed Gardens of Eagan, an organic, fresh-market vegetable farm in Minnesota, I was challenged with how to define the farm in the competitive wholesale market. Were we the tomato specialists? Were we the sweet corn experts? Perhaps we were the farm with the longest delivery season or the widest selection of gourmet varieties. It didn’t take long for me to conclude that “the farm is its people.” Whatever we grew, however we provided service, the people who worked on the farm made it what it was.

As my interim tenure here at MOSES draws to a close, I’ve been reflecting on “What defines MOSES?”

Yes, MOSES runs the best organic farming conference, the most amazing organic-answer-line, and cutting-edge field days. But, most of all, MOSES is its people.

In these 7 months as Interim Executive Director, I have had the incredible privilege of working alongside the MOSES staff and board. What a great group of individuals! Contrary to my belief that summer was some kind of lull here at MOSES, the staff has been unbelievably busy. They held a record number of field days and Rural Women’s Project events with barn-busting attendance. Showing off Midwestern hospitality, MOSES hosted the USDA’s annual gathering of over 100 Beginning Farmer and Rancher grant recipients from all over the United States. Of course, without skipping a beat, the MOSES staff kept the organic farming community informed through social media, the Organic Link e-news, the answer line, and this Organic Broadcaster newspaper.

The less visible people of MOSES, the 10-member board of directors, worked tirelessly in the national search for our next executive director. Not since the founding board of 1999 has so much responsibility for the direction and success of MOSES been held in the hands of this volunteer board. To them I say, “Cheers! Well done!”

At the end of this month, John Mesko will become the new MOSES Executive Director and one of “its people.” He, no doubt, will influence and shape the organization and, along with the board and staff, continue to educate, inspire and empower farmers in ever more effective ways.

A parting question: Are YOU one of MOSES’s people? You are if you attend the MOSES Conference or a field day. You are if you call the answer line. Your questions inform our specialists about what farmers are wrestling with and influence what resources we create. You are MOSES’s people if you teach and grow as a MOSES mentor or mentee. You are MOSES’s people if you read the Organic Broadcaster and share what you learn.

You get the picture. The staff, the board and the organic farming community define MOSES. I’m glad to be a part of it, and glad you are, too.

– Linda Halley, MOSES Interim Executive Director

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MOSES hires new leader

**By Audrey Alwell**

The MOSES staff and board welcome John Mesko as the nonprofit’s new executive director. He starts at MOSES Sept. 26.

Mesko is a familiar face in Midwest farming circles. He has been the head of the Sustainable Farming Association (SFA) in Minnesota since 2009, helping to organize the network of farmers grow.

“We believe John brings the experience and vision needed to build on MOSES’s strengths, keep democratic standards high, continue to provide excellent programming, and reach out to all growers seeking environmental and economic sustainability,” said Sylvia Burgos Toftness, president of the MOSES Board of Directors.

Mesko steps into the leadership role vacated by the organization’s founding executive director, Faye Jones, who retired from MOSES in March. Linda Halley has been serving as the interim director for the organization. Her last day at MOSES is Sept. 28.

“Linda provided a critical bridge to MOSES’s next phase,” said Burgos Toftness. “Her credible and measured leadership not only helped staff continue to contribute at the highest level, but also fostered an atmosphere for a smooth transition to John.”

Mesko has a bachelor’s degree in agronomy and a master’s in farm management from Purdue University. His unique career has spanned all facets of agriculture, from fertilizer sales and biotechnology research to leading a large network of sustainable farmers and starting his own farm. In each role, he has worked to promote a better understanding and appreciation of how food is produced.

“I am a firm believer that farmers are the original caretakers of the environment,” Mesko said. “I’ve always sought ways to bring the food and farming community together to promote farming practices that produce abundant, healthy food in a sustainable manner.”

“MOSES is the recognized leader in our movement,” he added. “It’s truly an honor to have an opportunity to build upon the foundation already laid down. Sustainable and organic agriculture hold the solution for many of the issues facing the environment, rural communities and our food system. I’m thrilled to be part of a great organization, helping to bring those solutions forward.”

Mesko and his wife, Lisa, have two daughters, Gabrielle and Sarah. The family raises grass-fed beef on a 100-acre farm in east central Minnesota. He also teaches a college-level environmental science class and regularly speaks about sustainability, farming and the future of agriculture.

SFA has named longtime staff member Jerry Ford as interim executive director for the organization.

New law plays hide-and-seek with GMO labeling

**By Harriet Behar**

On July 29, 2016, President Barack Obama signed into law a bill that requires all food packages to indicate whether or not they contain genetically modified ingredients (GMIs).

This bill, the “National Bioengineered Food Disclosure Standard,” was passed by both houses of Congress about two weeks before this signing. Consumer advocacy groups and other organizations had nicknamed this bill the DARK Act—Denying Americans the Right to Know.

So what does this bill actually require? Not a clear on-package statement. Manufacturers could choose to put statements such as “produced with genetic engineering,” “partially produced with genetic engineering,” or “may be produced with genetic engineering” depending on the type of food in the package and its ingredients, as had been required by Vermont. (Vermont’s labeling law has been superseded by the passage of this Federal law.)

However, this clear and easy-to-read statement is not required. Instead, the law requires manufacturers only to disclose this information through the use of a QR (quick response) code—those strange-looking matrix barcodes that you can scan with a smartphone to access a website with additional information. The package needs a statement such as, “Scan here for more food information.” The label also could state “Call for more food information,” and list a toll-free number, or provide a website where consumers can find information.

This bill enables food manufacturers to hide the information and forces the public to seek it out. The statement is not even mandated to explain that the “more food information” is actually the place you need to go to find out the GM content of the food you are buying and eating. To confuse things further, the bill does not use the common identifier “genetically engineered or modified,” but instead introduces a new term, “bioengineered.”

It is estimated that 80 percent of all processed foods sold in the United States include ingredients that originated from genetically modified crops. Most American consumers have no idea that they have been consuming GMO foods. Even for consumers who purchase organic foods, it is difficult to avoid any GMOs in their diets, especially when the food package does not tell you whether or not GMOs are in it. The Food and Drug Administration is concerned that this new labeling law, to be implemented by the USDA, would conflict with FDA’s required statements on food packaging. The concern for the FDA (and many others) is that the definition of bioengineering is confusing and misleading. That definition, which states “Bioengineering...refers to a food (A) that contains genetic material that has been modified through in vitro recombinant deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) techniques; and (B) for which the modification could not otherwise be obtained through conventional breeding or found in nature.”

The FDA correctly points out that a food such as soybean oil, may have originated from a genetically engineered soybean. However, since the oil does not contain the “genetic material” protein where the genetically modified DNA is present, it would not technically need to be labeled as bioengineered. Many question if this loophole actually provides the “truth in labeling” that a real labeling law should clarify.

The FDA also stated, “It may be difficult to demonstrate that a particular modification could not be obtained through conventional breeding or even that it could not occur in nature.” With the many new genetic engineering techniques of turning genes on and off, moving their location within the DNA and more, this statement offers a huge loophole to food manufacturers in order to “hide” the genetic modification of their foods. How does one prove that something could not occur in nature?

Livestock products that come from animals fed GMO bioengineered feeds, do not need to inform consumers through the QR code, website or toll free number that these are bioengineered, because under this law, they are not considered GMO. On this point, there is a good aspect to this law, at least these livestock products cannot use the non-GMO label in the marketplace.
**Questions about organic farming? Ask a Specialist**

MOSES Organic Specialists answer your questions about organic production and certification.

**CALL:** Organic Answer Line 888-551-4769 or 715-778-5775

**SUBMIT:** Click “Ask a Specialist” button at mosesorganic.org/ask.

**READ:** Browse answers to questions at mosesorganic.org/ask.

**DOWNLOAD:** Organic Fact Sheets at mosesorganic.org/publications/organic-fact-sheets.

**DNA can be found even in a speck of dust. It is to your best advantage to have that truck cleaned before you load that valuable crop of organic grain you worked so hard to grow. If the load tests positive for GMO due to a dirty truck, the trucker will still get paid for hauling the grain, but you will lose your organic price. Don’t be shy to request cleaning the truck before loading your grain.**

**Remainder to complete a clean truck affidavit, and document all other crop and equipment cleaning activities on the farm to show your organic certifier you are doing your due diligence to protect the organic integrity of your crop.**

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**Will I be putting organic grain in an on-farm bin and then shipping it later this fall to a broker? Is there anything I should do to ensure a smooth shipment and sale?**

Answer by Harriet Behar

You should check the quality of your grain. It should be clean of chaff and weed seeds when you put it in the bin. Many farmers run their grain through a rotary screen cleaner to reduce extraneous matter that could encourage insect problems. The cleaner your grain is when you ship it, the less “dockage” your buyer will take off your payment.

If you have your own livestock, you can feed them undersized, splits or lower quality grain on-farm. If you do some pre-cleaning, you are able to retain these culls for your own use. Always thoroughly clean the bin each year before using it. If it has a perforated floor, pull that up and clean out any old grain or chaff to prevent infestations from starting in the new grain you put in the bin. The best method of pest control is prevention.

If pests have been an issue in your bin, consider putting some diatomaceous earth on the bin floor, adding a little more as you are loading the grain to prevent insect problems. See the Insecto website for recommended amounts and usage directions (www.insecto.com). If you use D.E., tell your buyer, since sometimes it can be hard on their equipment. They would like to know it was used in your bin. D.E. use is approved for organic production in post-harvest handling.

If your grain could have vomitoxin, aflatoxin or other mycotoxins due to wet weather or harvesting when not completely dry, have it tested so you know what you are shipping. Depending on the buyer and how they’ll use your grain, you might be able to ship it with some mycotoxin in it. Knowing levels ahead of time will prevent you from shipping grain that could be rejected at the buyer’s loading dock.

It is also a very good idea to retain samples from each bin you ship from, in case there are any questions about the quality of your grain. If you question the testing or quality opinion of your buyer, and you shipped all if it without retaining a sample, you don’t have any evidence to rebut their test or quality rating. Many local feed mills can do some basic testing for you, including test weights, so you know ahead of time what you are shipping and don’t rely solely on the buyer’s tests.

Lastly, always verify the truck that comes to the farm to pick up your grain is clean. Even if it comes from an organic buyer, the trucker may have transported GMO grain before coming for your load. GMO testing is very sensitive—GMO DNA can be found even in a speck of dust. It is to your best advantage to have that truck cleaned before you load that valuable crop of organic grain you worked so hard to grow. If the load tests positive for GMO due to a dirty truck, the trucker will still get paid for hauling the grain, but you will lose your organic price. Don’t be shy to request cleaning the truck before loading your grain.

**Can I bale graze non-certified livestock in a certified organic hay field this winter?**

Answer by Lauren Langworthy

Livestock that are certified organic must only be fed certified organic feed. Sometimes, though, producers find themselves in a situation where they’re feeding uncertified animals on certified organic ground. For example, you may custom graze someone else’s herd on your own certified organic pastures, or you may rotate livestock onto hay or crop fields during your off-season so that you can use their manure and soil-building abilities to support the coming year’s production. In a short answer, yes, you can graze non-certified livestock on land where you grow a certified organic crop. These uncertified animals do not need to be fed certified organic feed simply because they are on your certified organic ground.

However, if you are planning to manage uncertified animals on certified ground, there are a few considerations you will want to think about. It is likely that your certifier will consider the waste hay, dropped feed, and manure in terms of applied manure with bedding. However, different certifiers could take different viewpoints on how to categorize the application. It is important to check with your certifier before taking any action that could endanger the certification of that land.

You will want to be certain that the feedstuffs you are using won’t be leeching prohibited substances into your pasture. Using the example of hay—you may want to make sure the hay you are purchasing doesn’t have strings or netting that has been treated with a prohibited substance like a fungicide. I would recommend asking your supplier about the netting, wrapping, or strings that were used on the crop before making a purchase, then checking with your certifier if the binding was treated before purchasing. If the hay does have treated binding and your certifier allows you to use it, you’ll want to remove the wrapping and take it off pasture to prevent the substance from leeching into your soil.

While you’re speaking with the supplier, you will also want to know if the feed was treated with any fungicides, preservatives, or inoculants that are not approved in organic production. Again, if any of these substances have been applied, you should talk to your certifier before proceeding.

By asking good questions and thinking ahead, you can help your land benefit from some helpful animal pressure in your off-season, even if the livestock isn’t certified. Please just proceed with caution and in good communication with your certifier to make sure that your productive crop season ahead is in good standing with the NOP.

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**“How do I grow high-quality fall brassicas?”**

Answer by Jennifer Nelson

Organic farming is a long-term process. Always start the year by building a good cover crop, something that will over-winter and return in spring like cereal rye, clover or vetch. If that didn’t happen, or if you’re farming your acreage more intensively, you can also start with a spring cover crop like a mix of field peas and oats. You can research your cover crop options to find the best mix for your soil needs. A good...
NOP’s organic control system designed to protect organic integrity

By Miles McEvoy

The National Organic Program (NOP), part of the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), oversees a $43 billion U.S. industry made up of more than 31,000 certified organic operations located in 100 countries. As the regulatory program responsible for organic agriculture, the NOP’s primary role is protecting the integrity of the USDA organic seal and the organic standards. We protect that integrity through our work with certifiers, individual states, foreign governments, and the vigilance of many of you.

Protecting organic integrity starts with having a thorough and complete organic control system, which is essential to maintain the health of this growing industry. The NOP’s regulatory work ensures achievable standards, fair competition, and a reasonable, rational and practical certification process for all farmers and businesses. Our organic enforcement activities provide a level playing field. The NOP’s system of controls supports all farmers’ ability to succeed in the organic marketplace, if they comply with the requirements.

The organic industry is ripe with opportunity—job opportunity, economic opportunity for new and beginning farmers, premium price opportunity for smallholders in Asia, Africa and Latin America, and opportunity to protect biodiversity, improve soil and water quality, and to provide a path to a sustainable future. The industry is prosperous, and opportunity is not limited to U.S. domestic markets.

To ensure effective oversight and control for organic operations around the world, the NOP accredits and oversees a network of nearly 80 third-party certifiers who certify organic farms and businesses to the USDA organic standards. The NOP’s ongoing accreditation process ensures certifiers are inspecting and verifying organic claims. Certifiers ensure that certified operations comply with the organic regulations by evaluating applications for certification, conducting on-site inspections (both annual and unannounced), approving the use of the organic label, conducting feed, yield and sales audits, and conducting residue testing. When certified operations participate in international trade, certifiers verify organic imports comply with the USDA organic regulations as they enter the U.S. market. As part of their enforcement role, certifiers conduct investigations and oversee complaint management for their certified operations.

For both domestic and imported organic agricultural products, the NOP investigates and takes action on complaints alleging violation of the organic regulations—to either bring operations into compliance or keep products that violate the USDA organic regulations out of commerce. Initial enforcement actions could include orders to cease and desist representing products as organic; notices of warning for minor violations; and referrals of investigations to accredited certifying agents, other Federal agencies, State programs and international trading partners.

For more serious violations, the NOP may take further enforcement action that results in the suspension or revocation of organic certification or accreditation, as well as civil penalties of up to $11,000 per violation for noncompliant sales of agricultural products. The NOP monitors organic certification activities around the world through assessments of international certifiers and foreign government organic programs.

To ensure effective oversight and control for organic operations around the world, the NOP accredits and oversees a network of nearly 80 third-party certifiers who certify organic farms and businesses to the USDA organic standards.

The world’s organic market is valued at over $80 billion U.S. dollars. International organic trade is expanding to meet the demands of the organic market. The U.S. sources many organic products and ingredients from foreign countries as well as supplies organic products to many of our trading partners.

In order to support international trade of organic products and to ensure the integrity of these products, the USDA’s Agricultural Marketing Service, in partnership with the Foreign Agricultural Service and the Office of the United States Trade Representative, has established equivalency arrangements with Canada, the 28 countries within the European Union, Switzerland, Japan and Korea. These arrangements lessen the burden of inspection and certification while ensuring that organic standards are met. They simplify the process for all producers, including small farms, to participate in the global organic market.

Equivalency arrangements allow participating governments to focus resources on compliance with organic standards, rather than expending resources on verifying multiple requirements that meet the same objectives. Government and certifier resources can be used for market surveillance, investigations and enforcement—rather than duplicative and redundant processes that provide no added value.

Mexico is in the process of implementing its organic regulations, and AMS is exploring the possibility of establishing an organic equivalency arrangement with that country. SENASICA, Mexico’s competent authority, has accredited nine certifying agents and those certifiers have certified hundreds of organic operations in Mexico under the Mexican organic regulations. AMS has provided technical assistance to SENASICA. We have conducted workshops in Mexico and SENASICA official has observed NOP accreditation audits.

As part of talks to explore equivalency, AMS conducted a full assessment of the Mexican organic control system this past March. We found that SENASICA has fully implemented their regulations, and has a quality control system in place. The system includes thorough accreditation processes, a robust enforcement system that includes market surveillance and complaint investigation procedures. The two countries are also discussing the importance of organic import certificates to provide additional verification of certification, a possible element of a future potential equivalency agreement.

Import certificates provide additional verification to ensure the integrity of imported organic products. Import certificates are issued by accredited certifiers to verify that individual organic shipments meet the USDA organic regulations. NOP import certificates are currently required for all organic imports from Japan, Korea and 29 European countries. Canada and Mexico are planning to implement import certificate requirements under their organic programs later this year, and AMS is developing a proposed rule to require import certificates for all organic products entering the U.S. market.

Achievable standards, fair enforcement, organic equivalency, and import certificates—all are part of a larger, vital system—the organic control system—that make up the NOP’s efforts to protect organic integrity.

It is critical to the success of the organic sector that a robust, thorough, and effective organic control system is in place, with enforceable standards. It protects organic farmers and handlers and assures consumers that when they buy organic they are getting the organic products they are paying for.

Miles McEvoy is Deputy Administrator of the USDA National Organic Program.
Organic Grain — from page 1

The outlook for the coming year remains steady. There could be some inventory carried over from last year’s crop to go along with a potentially big 2016 crop. With imports now filling in the gaps, it looks as though there will be enough supply to fill the growing organic demand. With such growth, the future for the organic market looks strong and producers should continue to see great price premiums compared to conventional markets.

Kevin Harbut is a grain merchandiser at FW Cobs Company. FW Cobs Company purchases organic feed grain throughout the Midwest and Canada.

Organic Imports — from page 1

uncovered fraud or unapproved production methods in organic products from Turkey.

“There have also been instances where a few Turkish companies were found to have been using fraudulent organic certificates. Turkish news articles report that consumers may be misled by conventional products that are marketed as organic, mostly in open air bazaars or independent stores where a vendor could more easily sell a fake organic product. Although inspections and transparency in the Turkish organic food sector are improving, the integrity of organic farming, production, shipping and marketing is not always guaranteed. Consumers are advised to look for organic labels and be cautious of unpackaged products marketed as organic.” (January 26, 2016; “GAIN Report # TR601, Turkish Organic Market Overview” by USDA’s Global Agriculture Information Network)

Turkey and Ukraine have exported significant amounts of corn and soybeans to the U.S. Both countries are dealing with massive civil unrest. It raises the question of how organic on-farm inspections and integrity can be maintained in those circumstances.

The European Union and Canada were so concerned about the integrity of organic imports from these countries that, in late May (EU) and early June (Canada), they cancelled the accreditation of ETKO, the agency that certifies organic production in Turkey and the Ukraine. As a result, traders from Turkey and the Ukraine had to scramble to find markets, such as the U.S., where there is less risk of rejection. The shift to non-EU destinations would explain the drastic swings in exports to the U.S. in comparable year-to-year data. There is an apparent perception that the U.S. is an easy target to dump “organic” grain.

The U.S. organic market has seen growth in annual sales consistently above 10 percent. (Source: Organic Trade Association) The USDA’s Economic Research Service (ERS) data shows that 40 percent of organic corn and up to 70 percent of organic soybeans are imported. Will continued growth of the U.S. organic market be at the expense of U.S. organic producers, which further stifles domestic growth in organic acres?

U.S. organic grain farmers produce the highest quality organic grains. Producers are subject to rigid certification standards and an audit trail back to the fields where the grain was grown on their farm. It is what the organic label has come to mean to consumers. To ensure organic integrity, all organic imports and producers in other countries should meet the same standards that U.S. producers proudly meet.

What Farmers Can Do

1. Ask potential buyers if they are importing grain.
2. If they are, explain that these imports are lowering domestic prices to unprofitable levels for you.
3. Call your Senator and Representative to ask them to inquire what USDA’s NOP is doing about potential fraud in organic imports.

Why is the U.S. viewed as an easy destination to ship “organic” grain?

John Bobbe is the executive director of the Organic Farmers’ Agency for Relationship Marketing (OFRMA) and author of Marketing Organic Grain, A Farmers Guide, available at moesorganic.net.

Parents share concerns about getting farm work done while caring for kids

By Jennifer Nelson

As the farm season draws to a close, I reflect on our MOSES field days and the wonderful conversations I had with farmers about all things farming, especially the reality of life on a producing farm. Our conversations often centered on how to raise children on the farm and get your work done.

As families return to farming, more and more parents are walking that fine balance of caring for little ones while getting the necessary work done on the farm. Conversations about farm safety can be uncomfortable to begin because the statistics are scary, and a bit overwhelming. Where do we farm parents start if we’re just trying to get the work done, and care for our children?

The first step is awareness, and open space to talk about our farm parent joys and fears.

Themes have emerged during our conversations around the benefits and challenges.

The delights and benefits of raising children on the farm are invaluable and consistent across the board, including:

• Lots of room to play
• Instills passion, love and respect for land & good work ethics
• Strong family bond & character
• Real-life experience with life/death cycle
• Teaches responsibility
• Better health

The challenges and reality of farming with children are also consistent. Logistic challenges vary with different types of farming production, but themes include:

• Finding affordable child care
• Instilling a love for farming – safely
• Risk of injury/death
• Keeping friends/visitors safe
• Creating fun
• Combating isolation
• Keeping family in harmony

The challenges and reality of farming with children are also consistent. Logistic challenges vary with different types of farming production, but themes include:

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• Keeping friends/visitors safe
• Creating fun
• Combating isolation
• Keeping family in harmony

Farm families’ value of the benefits outweighs the fear of the risks, but of course everyone wants to learn to mitigate that risk and make the family farm work for them. Balancing the benefits and risks can be easier through education and there are many great resources to use as safety tools in our tool belt.

MOSES and The National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NCCRAHS), have many resources and tools available to help ensure safety and mitigate risk.

First, The National Farm Medicine Center

Improve & protect your organic farming profits

Oren Wells, president
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chalief@bluevalley.net | www.ofarm.org

In Support of: The National Children’s Center for Rural and Agricultural Health and Safety (NCCRAHS), have many resources and tools available to help ensure safety and mitigate risk.
Research shows fishmeal improves poultry performance

By Jody Paddock

Recently completed research by the Fertrell Company of Indianapolis, Ind., indicates that broiler chickens fed a ration including fishmeal grow larger and have better feed conversion than those without the nutritional supplement.

A highly concentrated protein, fishmeal helps balance essential amino acids in poultry feed, particularly methionine and lysine. It is highly digestible and palatable to poultry, and averages 58 to 72 percent protein, and 1280 to 1550 Kcal/lb of energy.

Protein needed for animal growth is actually a need for a diversity of amino acids, which are the building blocks of proteins. While all amino acids are important, some cannot be produced by ani-
mals and so must come through the diet. These are “essential amino acids,” and methionine is one for poultry.

Methionine is required for several functions in poultry, responsible for a variety of metabolic reactions and essential for cell development. It is tied to weight gain and egg production.

There are limited sources of methionine for poultry. Synthetic methionine is added to non-
organic poultry diets, but is restricted in organic production. This has been a topic of discussion at the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), with pressure to remove the allowance for limited use of synthetic methionine in poultry diets. Alternative sources such as algae, ground beetles and high-methionine corn have been explored, but come up short.

Fishmeal is an important natural source of methionine in organic poultry diets. The Fertrell research was done to quantify the value of fish-
meal in broiler production, and proves that there are animal health and economic benefits to includ-
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larily can carry high levels of contaminants such as heavy metals or antibiotics. Fishmeal used in organic diets must be carefully sourced.

While a great source of protein for poultry, inclusion of fishmeal in rations should be kept at below 5 percent to assure a fishy flavor is not consumed readily. As mentioned previously, providing methionine and other essential amino acids from grain crops or other sources is challenging. Synthetic methio-
nine is not encouraged under organic regulations. Those with demand for vegetarian chickens will for now have to turn to synthetic methionine instead of fishmeal, but this may not be an option for organic producers in the future.

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Another argument against incorporating fish meal is its relative expense. As stated above, the cost of a 50 lb. bag with fishmeal was $27.48 versus $26.45 without fishmeal. This is a difference of 2 cents per pound, $1.08 per 50 lb. bag, or $4.12 per ton. The small difference in overall cost/ton of feed compared to the benefits seen by the incorpo-
ration of fishmeal should easily balance out.

‘Vegetarian’ Chickens

Some farmers have seen consumer demand for chickens raised with a vegetarian diet. However, chickens are not naturally vegetarians, as they eat bugs and other insects that they find for protein. While fish might not be their naturally selected form of animal protein, it is one that they will consume readily.

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Insiders provide tips to help farmers access farm-to-school market

By Kelli Boylen

Farm-to-school can be a good market for vegetable growers, orchards and value-added producers. These insights can help you get started.

### Food Safety First

“Schools have a responsibility to serve safe food, and that is their top priority in sourcing food,” said Jane Jewett of the Minnesota Institute for Sustainable Agriculture. There is extra paperwork for farmers, but many find it worth the effort, she said.

If you’re making a value-added product to sell to schools, you should research food safety regulations for your state to be sure your product can be used in schools. Jewett recommended. You can learn about food safety standards from your local Department of Health, state food regulatory agency and/or your state Department of Agriculture.

Schools participating in the school nutrition programs (National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program) must comply with all sanitation and health standards as required by applicable state agency and/or local laws and codes, which vary by location. For example, in Wisconsin, intact fruits and vegetables can be sold to schools, as well as vegetables cut during harvesting, such as lettuce and cauliflower when it involves rough field dressing only.

“It is very important to know the regulations and have your ‘ducks in a row’ before you approach a school,” Jewett said. “Make it a point to educate yourself and know how to answer questions about on-farm food safety before you talk to a district’s food service director.”

She noted that regulations vary not only from state to state, but also from product to product. “It can quickly get confusing. Don’t give up right away; take the time to make sure you understand the regulatory landscape for your products.”

### Scale

It is also necessary to understand the scale and needs of the school district you want to approach. Jewett said many larger schools purchase local produce only through distributors, while smaller schools may source directly from growers. In a K-12 setting, food producers should contact the food service director. At a college, setting up a meeting with the general manager, executive chef or operations manager would be a good place to start.

Some states have online listings of schools that participate in Farm to School programs. You can find state-level Farm to School program information and contacts at the National Farm to School Network: www.farmtoschool.org.

The Minneapolis School District serves more than 35,000 student lunches a day. The district is starting its fifth school year with a farm-to-school program, working with small to mid-size, sustainable growers in the area to incorporate a variety of vegetables and fruit into school meals.

This year, more than 15 local and regional farms (within a 250-mile radius of the city) are providing everything from fresh honeydew melon to sweet potatoes. The district introduces new foods on trial-runs to see students’ response. The first Thursday of every month is a meal made entirely from local foods.

The biggest mistake growers and producers make is to not consider exploring the farm-to-school market, according to Kate Seybold, farm to school coordinator for Minneapolis Public Schools. “It can seem very intimidating but it can be done,” she said. “There is definitely a learning curve for farmers who are new to this. But, we work hard to be great communicators and make it happen.”

The district holds public meetings to reach out to growers and potential partner-producers. It has even helped producers develop the necessary food safety plans.

Seybold said a challenge for some producers who approach the district to sell their products is the sheer scale of what they need—Imagine 900 pounds of carrots or 600 pounds of cucumbers each week—and when they need it, based on the school menus. “This is much different than growing for a CSA or a farmers’ market,” she said. “But we work hard to make it a feasible and positive program for our farmers.”

The district is willing to split a product between two farmers if a single farmer can’t supply the weekly orders. Seybold said they try to maintain some flexibility with their menu to allow farm-to-school items to be featured when they are harvested.

Minneapolis Public Schools works with a produce processing company. Farmers sell the produce to the processor, and the processor delivers the produce to the schools. This system provides farmers an opportunity to work with wholesale buyers and possibly tap into other wholesale markets.

### Market for Seconds

One of the big advantages of selling to schools is that it can give unmarketable products a market, said Seybold. For example, their seller of butternut squash had sold primarily only to co-ops in the past. Those customers wanted unblemished squash in the two- to three-pound range. The farmers would often dispose of larger squash or ones that had cosmetic flaws, even though those were perfectly good food. Since the schools serve the squash cooked to students, it doesn’t matter so much how they look raw.

Another example is a local poultry company that didn’t have as much of a market for its drumsticks as it did for wings or breasts. “The students love eating drumsticks though, so it is a win-win,” Seybold said.

The Minneapolis School District also seeks out smaller apples that are not easily marketable, which fit in younger students’ hands better. Seybold added that slightly blemished apples can be processed to make apple-based desserts, opening up a market for farmers with seconds.

Farm-to-School Resources

- **Wisconsin Farm to School Toolkit for Producers**
  - www.cias.wisc.edu/toolkits/ffarmers
  - This online resource includes a set of “tools” to help farmers access the farm-to-school market. The toolkit was produced by the UW-Madison Center for Integrated Agricultural Systems, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

- **Food Hub Knowledge Base**
  - food-hub.org/knowledgebase/farm-to-school
  - Click on “Far Sellers” on the left side to find information about marketing to schools, hosting school visits on your farm, and selling directly to institutions.

- **Cornell University Farm to School Outreach**
  - farmschool.cce.cornell.edu/resources/resources-for-farmers
  - This clearinghouse offers a variety of information about selling to schools.

- **GAP Resources**
  - **National GAP Program**
    - www.gaps.cornell.edu/weblinks.html
    - This website offers online good agricultural practices training, food safety training materials and links to other food safety resources.
  - **Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) & Good Handling Practices (GHP)**
    - www.ams.usda.gov/services/auditing/gap-ghp
    - The USDA explains GAP and GHP.

### Market Gabriel

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  - Excellent For Double Crop

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Create enterprise budget to see what’s providing profits to your farm

By Craig Chase

You are bent over harvesting your tomatoes, windrowing your small grains, or milking cows. As you’re working, do you wonder if what you are harvesting or collecting makes a profit? What kind of return on your investment of labor, land, and equipment are you getting? These may not be things you think about while busy in the field or barn, but they are things you need to think about if you want to run a sustainable farm business.

The best way to determine profitability of a specific crop or livestock operation is to develop an enterprise budget. An enterprise budget is an estimate of the costs and economic returns (profit) for a particular crop or livestock enterprise.

Enterprise budgets allow you to look at the details you can use to make decisions about improving profit, improving your quality of life (such as reducing labor at certain times of the year without reducing profit), or achieving some other business or personal goal. Creating an enterprise budget guides you to the specific inputs and resources (labor, machinery, and land) needed and how that is balanced by the income you generated by selling that particular crop or livestock. It will give you information that can help you see where you are making money, and allow you to make informed decisions if you wish to make changes.

Formats for enterprise budgets vary in complexity, layout, and assumptions. Templates can be found from most state agricultural universities. We present some in the Fearless Farm Finances book and will have some available at our Fearless Farm Finances workshop next month in Lanesboro, Minn.

The enterprise budget examples we will present, and those shown on websites and from universities, will use generalized numbers shown as examples only. Your own actual farm data which you will gather may differ significantly from the examples presented. We don’t recommend that you make any decisions on your farm based on our examples. It is important, and valuable, for you to develop your own enterprise budgets based on your own farm records.

Sail through field of finances:

- Keep better records
- Make informed pricing decisions
- Improve farm profits

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Craig Chase, Iowa State University
Paul Dietmann, Badgerland Financial

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While you probably won’t have time to develop these budgets during harvest season, it is a great time to at least develop the harvest and sales records that you can use later.

Format for Enterprise Budget

A typical enterprise budget consists of five sections. The first section shows the total amount of product produced and sold multiplied by the price it was sold at (the revenue). This is where the yields and prices that you track as you harvest are needed.

The second section is the cost of the production inputs. This includes items such as fertilizers, feed, veterinary, and other field or bed preparation costs. Your pre-harvest activities and costs are included here.

The third section is the harvest component of the budget, and includes costs associated with harvest (primarily labor) and harvest packaging.

The fourth section includes the cost of ownership. As we discuss in the Fearless Farm Finances book, each farm has assets included on its balance sheet, such as the land, farm buildings and equipment. These assets are used in your farming operation to generate revenues, and, hopefully, some net farm income. The enterprise budget must include some way to account for these costs of ownership. There are various ways to allocate the relevant portion of cost of asset ownership to each enterprise, which we explain in the book and workshop. One simple way is to take all of the ownership costs and divide by the percent of your farm acreage used by this particular enterprise, another is to use the percent of total sales income that your enterprise is of the total farm. You can decide on the method to use based on the type of operation.

The fifth and last section is where you simply add up all the cost components and subtract them from the revenue (section 1) and see if the number is positive (net income) or negative (net loss).

If your enterprise is contributing to net income, then the question becomes: is it contributing a lot or just a little? Determining profit margins is really beneficial to evaluating which of your enterprises is contributing to meeting your financial goals and which are not.

If your enterprise is not contributing to net income very much or at all, you need to determine why. This is where an enterprise budget really comes in handy. You can use an enterprise budget to guide changes you can make to your production practices, evaluate your price, and/or alter the mix of products that you are currently producing.

A change in product mix is easiest for those producing fruits and vegetables and hardest for farmers with fewer crop and livestock alternatives. Let’s look at some real-life farmer examples to see how this works. While these examples are

To Enterprise Budget on page 16
Women find support, ideas through Rural Women’s Project

By Lisa Kivirist

Look around any MOSES Conference or field day and undoubtedly you will see women farmers well-represented in numbers. Not surprising, as women make up one of the fastest growing groups of new farmers overall, particularly launching smaller-scale and diversified operations championing sustainable and organic agriculture.

MOSES takes this commitment to female farmers a step further through our Rural Women’s Project, a specific year-round venture now heading into its ninth year providing training, resources and networking specifically for women.

As one of the few, if not the only, grassroots organic agriculture nonprofits with a dedicated program for female farmers, MOSES holds a deep-rooted understanding of the importance of valuing and prioritizing women farmers in growing the number of farms and the movement overall. The Rural Women’s Project (RWP) bases itself on the networking model, the idea that tremendous opportunity unfolds when women are able to connect with and share with each other.

I’ve had the personal honor of developing and facilitating the Rural Women’s Project since its birth in 2009 and seeing it blossom into the award-winning, unique initiative it is today. As we plan for our ninth year, it’s a good opportunity to recap and reflect on the impact of the RWP.

History

The core elements of this project focus on four key areas:

1) In Her Boots: Sustainable Agriculture for Women by Women

Our flagship summer workshop series consists of day-long sessions on women-owned farms around the Midwest. From detailed farm tours to up-close and personal Q&A sessions with the farm owners, In Her Boots provides a welcoming setting for women in all stages of farming to gather and share their experiences.

Each Boots workshop is unique with different farm hosts and operations, so women often attend more than one. In 2016, our five Boots workshops ranged from a diversified grazing operation at Dorothy’s Grange in Blanchardville, Wis., run by April Prusia, to the intensive “Lean Farm” vegetable operation with farmer Rachel Hershberger in Goshen, Ind.

2) Women Caring for the Land, Soil Sisters, other collaborations

As exemplified in all MOSES programming, the RWP thrives through cooperatively working with other organizations that share our sustainability values. We facilitate “Women Caring for the Land” workshops with the Women, Food & Agriculture Network (WFAN), sharing conservation ideas and resources with female landowners.

The annual Soil Sisters: A Celebration of Wisconsin Farms and Rural Life is now a full August weekend of farm tours, workshops and culinary events hosted by women farm owners, In Her Boots provides a welcoming setting for women in all stages of farming to gather and share their experiences.

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3) Conference programming

From workshop sessions to networking sessions to “ask an expert” sessions on everything from integrating kids to ergonomics and body care, the RWP offers various opportunities during the conference for women to connect and learn.

4) Local networks, media outreach and on-going resources

From supporting local women farmer networks to answering individual women farmer questions, the RWP works to support female farmers year-round. Additionally, as the program’s reputation and impact have grown, the RWP receives inquiries from reporters looking to connect with women farmers, a role we can readily play with the extensive network of female farmers now connected through the MOSES RWP.

Since the program’s launch, all these programs and outreach add up to over 5,000 women who have attended and harvested resources and inspiration through the RWP.

“As a beginning farmer transitioning from a different career, the Rural Women’s Project has been a bridge of support, and the farm tours and workshops have given me behind-the-scenes access to the concerns of farm management in uniquely interactive ways,” shared Amy Fenn from Madison, Wis. “The relationships and connections I’ve made have been invaluable lifelines and inspiration. The diverse groups are always welcoming with a shared sense that we’re collaborating on something meaningful and fun, both as individual women and as stewards of the land and food.”

Lisa Kivirist talks about resources available to women farmers at the recent “In Her Boots” workshop at Kathy Zeman’s farm in southeast Minnesota. Photo by Carly Stephenson

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To Rural Women’s Project next page
After these eight years of RWP programming, four key insights about the women farmers involved emerge:

- **Diversity in backgrounds**
  In Her Boots attendee ages range from the 18 to 25 sector to over 65, adding a lively exchange of ideas and perspectives. While the majority of these women are at the beginning stages of their farm—either in the research phase or under five years in operation—many of them are who are making a dignified livelihood out of organic agriculture, she said. “While I won’t be actively farming in my next life chapter, I want to support small organic farmers and food systems and be creative about how to do that beyond academics, either through grant-writing, putting together a project, or contributing to one already in place. This Boots workshop gave me lots of ideas and inspiration, and I felt part of a larger community of women committed to organics.”

- **Mid-Life farm start-ups**
  A sizeable segment of attendees represents “encore” farmers, women who are looking to launch farms mid-life, often coming into agriculture from entirely different careers. At the recent In Her Boots workshop at Kathy Zeman’s Simple Harvest Farm Organics in Nerstrand, Minn., Paula Foreman led a lunchtime discussion on starting to farm in your 50s and beyond. She speaks from experience, having herself launched Encore Farm in the Twin Cities on her 50th birthday.
  “I confess my big reason to host a Boots workshop is I know I can’t run this farm forever,” revealed Kathy Zeman of Simple Harvest Farm Organics. Her August In Her Boots session focused on organic diversified livestock. “We need more farmers raising livestock who are committed to organics. By connecting women to this place and what I do, they hopefully will keep their own farm vision and this movement moving forward.”

- **Collaboration commitment**
  The core inspiration behind the RWP programming stems from the women farmers who generously host these events, usually held smack dab in the middle of their busy growing season. The motivation to host often comes from the reality of needing to actively support a new generation of farmers.

- **Focus on Future**
  What’s next for the MOSES Rural Women’s Project? Further strengthening the organic movement by encouraging more women farmers to take on leadership positions on various levels to amplify the organic voice at the decision-making table. That’s exactly what farmer Christine Welcher is doing by running for Wisconsin State Assembly in the 32nd District this November, while also managing the farm at the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute in East Troy, Wis. “I’ve attended several In Her Boots workshops and always come away with both practical knowledge and also the realization that we women farmers need to step up and have our voices heard when it comes to our government’s priorities, which motivated me to run for Assembly,” Christine reflected. “The support of other female farmers serves as a huge source of inspiration and motivation for me. We all have each other’s back and support whatever seeds we may plant, from greens in the field to running for office.”

For more information about the Rural Women’s Project and upcoming events, check out: mosesorganic.org/rural-womens-project.

Lisa Kivirist coordinates the MOSES Rural Women’s Project. She is the author of several books, including the newest: Soil Sisters: A Toolkit for Women Farmers, available in the MOSES bookstore (mosesorganic.net).
place to start is with the MOSES fact sheet “How to Choose Cover Crops,” which is available online at moosorganic.org/organic-fact-sheets.

To ensure optimal nitrogen value and also create a good amount of biomass for soil microbes without allowing the cover crop to set seed, incorporate the cover crop in early to mid-June. By starting early, but not too early, you leave yourself enough time to work out many of the residual weed seeds in your field. Incorporate the cover crop the first time, then wait 30 days or so and work your field again, by tilling, cultivating or plowing, using whatever machinery and method you usually use for bed prep. Depending on the weather (always), you’ll ideally get another nice weed flush right before you plant. Prep your bed as usual right before planting by cultivating or tilling, then plant your brassica transplants.

The nutritious vegetable that they are, brassicas are heavy soil feeders. Making sure your soil macronutrients are balanced is key. Nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium levels need to be balanced, and not too high or low. Trace nutrients like manganese and boron can also make a big difference in the quality of your brassica crop. Soil tests (soiltest.cfaes.umn.edu, uwlab.soils.wisc.edu) applied to fertility practice are important to start with because it’s really hard to make drastic changes in your soil chemistry at any time, especially in the thick of the season.

Some symptoms of out-of-balance soil resulting in nutrient deficiencies:
- Light yellow color and/or prematurity head formation also called “buttoning” can be a nitrogen deficiency.
- Too much nitrogen can cause the plants to grow too fast also resulting in a hollow stem.
- Large pest infestations can mean your plant isn’t healthy and can’t defend itself. Iron can inhibit calcium uptake, causing localized browning.
- Phosphorous deficiency, especially when the phosphorus can’t move in the cold of later fall, can cause the plant to turn purple.
- Boron deficiency can cause a hollow brassica stem, and browning and uneven heads.

Starting with healthy transplants is always essential to healthy produce. One of the most difficult parts of growing fall brassicas is having to care for the transplants in the greenhouse while you’re in the thick of summer harvest. Starting the seeds in a good soil mix, watering consistently, and applying a foliar feed or root drench fertilizer to boost your brassica plant’s health prior to transplanting can make all the difference in the health of your final product. Another option is to create a healthy seed bed in the field, seed with your varieties and bare root transplant from that. For more on this, see extension.umn.edu/gardenyard/vegetables/growing-broccoli-cabbage-and-cauliflower-in-minnesota.

If you’re buying seed varieties as most produce farmers do, ask the farmers in your area what has worked for them, and also try a few different varieties to find out what works best.

When the plants are in the ground, the best way to balance deficiencies is to either side-dress or foliar feed the plants. Going back to those soil tests and symptom list, you can know what you might need to attend to the health of your growing brassicas and create a mix of fertilizer and minerals in a hopper to be side-dressed once or twice throughout the growth life. Companies such as Midwestern Bio-Ag can work with you to read your soil tests and provide inputs to balance your soil. You can also try a few different products to find what works best.

At our farm, we foliar feed our brassicas weekly with a fish emulsion mixed with Photo Mag, both OMRI-approved applications. Our soil was in conventional production up until last year, and shows some deficiencies in most everything, including the trace minerals like boron. It’s been really important to give those brassicas feeders good additional nutrition as they grow this season.

Farming with Kids — from page 6

offers the ROPS (Roller Protection Structure) rebates to Minnesota and Wisconsin residents, providing a 70 percent rebate on the cost of purchasing and installing ROPS. Call to get a cost estimate for your tractor(s). The use of ROPS and a seat belt is estimated to be 90 percent effective in preventing death or serious injury in the event of a tractor rollover.

On-farm childcare can be made a lot easier with a fun, age-appropriate contained safe play area. The NCCRAHS offers many great resources including the booklet “Creating Safe Play Area on Farms,” which offers suggestions on creating a unique secured play area with appropriate activities based on age and developmental abilities.

Other resources and materials are available from NCCRAHS including:

CultivateSafety.org – practical methods for assessment of whether or not your child is ready for agricultural work tasks on your farm.

AgInjuryNews.org – Listing of agriculture-related injuries.

NAGCAT – Age developmental-based guidelines for youth performing agricultural work tasks.

Agriculture continues to be our nation’s most dangerous occupation, and the only worksite in the U.S. where children of any age can be present, they can also know that they’re assigning age-appropriate tasks to their children working on the farm.

At our MOSES field days, we asked the question on the post-evaluation, “As a result of this event, will you make any changes on your farm with regard to children’s farm safety? If yes, what will you change?” 65 percent of the attendees responded with yes, and gave responses like these:
- “Establish safe zones,”
- “Working on (safe) play areas;
- “Convincing husband to add rollover bar on the tractor;”
- “Talk to my (little) one about safe practices.”

Children’s farm safety education is not a one-stop-fixes-all shop. It is an on-going conversation and a continual re-evaluation of practices.

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Grow with us!
New book covers basics of pasture grazing

By Lauren Langworthy

Sarah Flack’s new book is a great introduction to all the facets of grazing for a beginning grazer—or a great reminder of the intricacies involved in “the basics” for someone who has been running livestock on grass for a while. The book starts with an introduction to the benefits of grazing on a pasture and a look at different grazing styles. From there, it blossoms into soil health, pasture species, and management of optimal forage. This section of the book is the most in-depth. Even experienced graziers will learn a thing or two about plant anatomy and species preferences.

Easy-to-read tables lay out different management practices, and simple graphs support a better understanding of the factors being discussed. Large color photos help the inexperienced grazer learn what great forage looks like. Set-aside boxes with great titles like “Avoid This Common Mistake!” help to draw attention to key points. All of this supports the encouraging tone of the book as it walks readers through what to look for, what to think about, and how to plan ahead.

The final third of this book is devoted to “Designing and Managing a Grazing System.” Whether you’re hoping to figure out daily acreage requirements for your herd, trying to figure out the infrastructure you’ll require for fencing and water, or trying to troubleshoot some pasture problems, you’ll find the basic information you need in this book to get your questions answered.

We’re looking forward to having Sarah’s great perspective at the 2017 MOSES Organic Farming Conference to share even more of her tremendous insight with the MOSES community.

Lauren Langworthy is a MOSES Organic Specialist, who uses a rotational grazing system for her own flock of sheep on her farm near Wheeler, Wis.
Anecdotal Points

Along with keeping track of feed consumption, the researchers also kept a log of behavior and development of the birds. Group A (fish) started developing their adult feathers three days before Group B (no fish). While this may seem trivial, imagine how much relief three days’ worth of better body insulation could bring during a cold chill in spring. Birds would also be ready to move to pasture three days sooner, helping to relieve pressures from coccidiosis or heat stress in the brooder during the summer months.

The behavior of the birds in Group A (fish) was also very different from the behavior in Group B (no fish). Group A birds were significantly calmer throughout the trial and not nearly as flighty or skittish as Group B. The birds in Group A were easier to move forward on pasture in their pens while Group B birds always struggled during moving time.

Finally, during processing, the birds in Group B (no fish) needed an extra 30 seconds of scalding time before they could be plucked. The feathers did not come out nearly as easily for the birds in Group B as in Group A. While this may not affect your bottom line directly, it will impact your time if you are doing the processing. It is believed that the increase in amino acids made the feathers from Group A easier to pluck, though there is no proof of this other than what was experienced.

Conclusion

Adding fishmeal to a broiler diet while keeping other nutritional constraints the same, researchers found an increase both in carcass weights and in feed conversion ratios. This resulted in an increased net profit of $3.04 per bird for birds fed a ration with fishmeal over those that were not. In addition to extra profit and larger carcass weights, birds fed fishmeal seemed calmer and easier to handle in the field. At processing, the fishmeal-fed birds were also easier to pluck. Overall, it is concluded that feeding fishmeal to poultry will increase a farmer’s bottom line and is worth the endeavor.
Farmer-veterans connect to share production ideas, resources

By Ryan Erisman

Ron Jost (pronounced ‘Yost’ got in over his head. When he came back from Afghanistan for the last time in December 2014, the former cop and Army intelligence analyst put together a plan for his next career. His father wanted to retire from working the family’s Cleveland, Wisconsin farm, and Ron wanted to transition it to a grass-fed beef operation.

While making the final preparations for getting settled in Cleveland, 2015, Ron wanted to get “a few hops on the side” to till up an old pasture. He wanted Mangalitsas, a Hungarian lard hog known for its wooly coat. He knew that chefs prized the Mangalitsas for their marbling and fat quality.

“I went to a breeder to buy a few, and she told me she wanted to sell the whole herd—sows, barrows, gilts, feeders—everything,” Jost explained. “It was a great price.” He paused. “Then I had to feed ‘em.

“I was in over my head pretty quickly. At the USDA office, I grabbed the business card for a Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) representative in Wisconsin and emailed him that night.”

The email that landed in my mailbox ended with “Please Help.” I’m the Midwest Regional Ambassador for the Farmer Veteran Coalition. I come at this from both sides. I grew up on an organic farm in Illinois and served 10 years as a Marine infantry officer with two tours in Iraq. I recently started my own farm in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin. I’m working to help farmer-veterans in the region plug into resources and available programs.

Ron and I talked for over an hour on our first phone call. I asked him about his military background and then gave him mine. It’s a good icebreaker. I had him walk me through his situation, his finances, and his decision-making up to this point.

“Ryan gave me good advice on shelters, watering systems, and fencing that wouldn’t cost too much,” Jost recalled. “Ryan got me to put on the brakes,” Ron noted. “I had it in my head that I had to accomplish all these things, and he had me step back and look at the long-term goals.”

We talked again in a few days and then the week after that. We’d end our conversations with Ron deciding on his next moves, and then he’d get back to me in a week. I don’t do any hand-holding—if people need that, they don’t have any business going into farming.

“Ryan broke down my situation almost like a mission analysis: This is what you have to accomplish, this is what you have to avoid, this is what you can put off until later. He got me to think about the logistics. I got back to work with a lot more focus,” Ron said.

For the past few years, I have also taken charge of organizing FVC members to attend the annual MOSES Organic Farming Conference. It’s the best networking and education opportunity we can offer to our members in the region.

“Ryan really wanted me to go to this farming conference in La Crosse,” Ron remembered. “I wasn’t sure I could get away. He said he’d had a cancellation and had a spot for me. I did my chores on Friday morning [Feb. 26th] and drove across Wisconsin. I was amazed by the presentations and seeing so many other small farmers like me.”

FVC and The Pasture Project sponsored a farmer-veteran networking session on Friday evening at the MOSES Conference. We got 32 farmer-veterans in the room. It was supposed to be a two-hour event; it lasted four hours.

“I had a blast,” Ron said. “Ryan got us talking to each other based on our farming enterprises. We were swapping production ideas and war stories round and round. I felt like I was struggling alone, and I suddenly realized I was part of this group—all these other veterans who were farming or just breaking into farming, like me. Then there was everything I learned at the conference. It was a huge boost.”

Things have gone well for Ron since the last MOSES Conference. He didn’t need any help on the marketing end—Jost Farms Heritage Pork is now served at The America Club in Kohler, Wisconsin, the only five-diamond restaurant in the Midwest.

On a national level, the Farmer Veteran Coalition, based in Davis, California, offers several programs and opportunities for members. The Fellowship Fund recipient. The Homegrown by Heroes label certifies products’ members’ as veteran grown and produced. The Coalition organizes the annual Farmer Veteran Stakeholders Conference and the Empowering Women Veterans Conference. It also partners with USDA, Farm Credit, Farm Bureau, Farmers Union, AgrAbility, NCAT/ATTRA, and countless regional and local organizations dedicated to helping farmers and veterans.

Veterans who want to join the Farmer Veteran Coalition or have questions about coalition services can go to www.farmvetco.org or call 530-756-1395.

“Then I had to feed ‘em.

“Ryan Erisman is the Midwest Regional Ambassador for the Farmer Veteran Coalition.

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**Inside Organics — from page 3**

Senator Tammy Baldwin of Wisconsin was able to get it on the public record that she had contacted an author of this bill, Senator Debbie Stabenow of Michigan, and received clarification that the law would, in any case, cause the Organic Food Production Act or its regulations to change to meet the requirements of this new legislation. The organic regulations have their own definition of genetic engineering, under the “excluded methods” section of our rule. (The National Organic Standards Board is developing a recommendation to update the excluded methods definition, to keep pace with changes in biotechnology.) Senator Stabenow stated this law “is only intended to require that USDA consider aligning the rules and regulations of the new GMO disclosure program established under this bill with the rules and regulations of the existing National Organic Program, not the inverse,... (This law) does not provide any authority to amend the Organic Foods Production Act or its rules and regulations.”

The USDA is required within a year to conduct a study that identifies potential technological challenges consumers may have in accessing bioengineering digital disclosure statements. This study is supposed to determine if landline telephones are available in stores so consumers can call toll free numbers. Wireless or cellular network availability for access to the internet for the QR codes and websites will be determined as well as the challenges retailers may have in meeting these infrastructure challenges.

The law does not ask the study to consider how long it may take for a consumer to make calls, or access the internet while pushing a grocery cart full of food in comparison to the transparency and ease of finding out the information if it were mandated to be written clearly on the package. A busy parent with children in tow, is not going to take the time to make a phone call or look up a website. Food shopping is not usually considered a recreational activity, with lots of leisure time associated with it in order to go web surfing.

The law also mandates the solicitation and consideration of public comments on this topic.

The first of these public comment periods closed Sept. 16. That one focused on the USDA Performance-Based Work Statement (PWS), which highlights the steps and processes needed to complete a project (i.e., the scope of the project, applicable documents, summary of requirements, and time frame), according to the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition. There will be other opportunities going forward. We’ll share those comment opportunities in our publications and social media outlets.

Within two years, the USDA is mandated to have a national standard for all food manufacturers to meet this bioengineered food standard. Consumers have been told there now is a GMO labeling law—but this law requires consumers to take extra steps to access the GMO information.

Another provision of the regulation specifies that food manufacturers cannot “collect, analyze, or sell any personally identifiable information about consumers or the devices of consumers.” This is supposed to protect the privacy of consumers who access websites where manufacturers disclose GMO ingredients. But, there is concern that once you have contacted a food manufacturer on this subject, you could be subject to advertising, data mining, or other communications.

This bill does not allow either bioengineered food or non-bioengineered food to state it is “safer” than its counterpart. In addition, the USDA cannot require any products that do not provide bioengineering disclosure on packaging when this law requires it. Nor does it give the USDA any authority to levy fines or other types of punishment if the law is not followed.

The purpose of this legislation, and the reason that it was passed overwhelmingly by Congress and signed by the President, was to prevent a patchwork of differing state labeling laws, which had the possibility of impeding interstate commerce and confusing consumers. Instead, we have a labeling law that does not mandate a label. Lastly, this law caused some division within the organic community, with the Organic Trade Association leadership breaking ranks with many of its members to provide strong support for this bill. OTA has said that the assurances that our organic regulations might not change if we defined a GMO to meet this bill, the fact that organic foods can now carry a non-GMO label without additional testing, and that non-organic livestock products cannot use the non-GMO label if these livestock were fed GMO feed, were significant enough “winds” to not hold out for a better bill. There was concern that a bill was going to be passed, and in order to get these few provisions in the bill, it was necessary to accept the many problems within it.

It is true that consumers who seek out non-GMO foods can purchase organic foods to meet their desires. However, if there were a true GMO label on foods and livestock products that originated from GMOs, many feel this transparency would cause even more consumers to seek out organic foods.

Senator Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut has publicly stated he plans to repeal this bill and introduce a true GMO labeling bill in the new Congress in early 2017. He is counting on some new faces after the election, and hopes there will be a legislative fix to this bad labeling law. The USDA is also mandated to write rules and to make sure the provisions of the bill do not make the bioengineered disclosure statement inaccessible to the majority of consumers. We will have a chance to make our voices heard on this aspect of the law—the fight is not over.

**Enterprise Budget — from page 9**

vegetable-focused, the principles are the same regardless of farming operation.

**Examples**

A CSA produce farm in Iowa was growing a wide variety of products for CSA members and selling extra produce to local restaurants. Without developing an enterprise budget for carrots, the producer decided to sell carrots at $.50 per pound wholesale. When he did an enterprise budget, he found his production and marketing costs were $.68 per pound. He was glad to have done the budget, as he could see that at $.50 per pound he was losing money on carrots. He didn’t think the wholesale buyers would pay more, so he needed to think of other options.

The producer decided to add a third row to the carrot beds, increasing yields significantly while increasing costs only slightly. This change in production practice lowered the cost of production and marketing to $.38 per pound. Not only did the farmer now have a profit margin on the carrots sold wholesale, he also had a higher profit margin on those sold and distributed within the CSA.

A different CSA farm in Iowa was growing a similar mix of products. However, this farm included a French filet type of green bean which the CSA customers really enjoyed. An enterprise budget was developed and determined that 18 hours of labor per bed (4 ft. by 10 ft.) was used to produce and market that crop. The producer looked at some of the other crops within the CSA box and determined the profit per hour labor used for several of them, too. While green beans were profitable, they required a large portion of labor at a busy time of year. The producer decided to reduce the number of beds in green

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**ORGANIC BROADCASTER**
Enterprise Budget — from previous page

beans, replacing them with other crops with a higher income per labor hour. Because labor was the constraint (only so many hours in a week, and so many hands to do the work), moving from higher to lower labor crops increased the overall profitability of the farm. A third pair of vegetable producers in Iowa developed enterprise budgets for the signature crops which the farm was known for. Since they sell a lot of each crop, it is important to have each be profitable. The farmers reviewed the profit margins for each of their key products, and shared these margins with their buyers. This supported an argument on why their prices needed to be increased. The buyers recognized the quality of the products, along with the farmers’ need to have a financially sustainable operation, and agreed to the new prices.

You can make these same types of changes to your farming operations (production practices, product mix, and pricing) if you have the right information. The right type of information includes harvest (yield and price) records, which you could record now. To do an analysis of the current harvest, you would also need to think back over the production year or look at your field records and list out the production practices you used. You’ll then estimate the labor involved for each particular crop you are studying, as well as the costs of all the inputs. You would then need to allocate your fixed assets (land and machinery) to your enterprises. With all of this information you could come up with a very useful enterprise budget for each crop you track.

Learn more about enterprise budgets and other topics that could help your farming operation become more profitable at the Fearless Farm Finances workshop Oct. 21-23, 2016 at Eagle Bluff Center in Lanesboro, Minn. Experienced organic farmers and ag experts will lead workshops on topics such as soil fertility, post management, and farm machinery. Land access, certification, and business planning are also on the agenda, along with expert-led roundtables. New Farmer U is hosted by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, Renewing the Countryside, and Land Stewardship Project. Register and learn more at NewFarmerU.org.

Farm Finance Workshop

MOSES is offering a day-long Fearless Farm Finances workshop Friday, Oct. 21 from 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. aimed at beginning farmers. The workshop takes place just prior to New Farmer U at the Eagle Bluff Environmental Learning Center in Lanesboro, Minn. Paul Dietmann, Badgerland Financial, and Craig Chase, Iowa State University, will teach about topics from enterprise budgets to cash flow projection, including record-keeping tools like balance sheets and income statements. Registration includes a copy of the MOSES book, Fearless Farm Finances. The workshop fee is $50, but New Farmer U participants pay just $25. See mosesorganic.org/events/fearless-farm-finances-workshop.

Farmer, Rancher Grants

The North Central Region SARE (NCR-SARE) recently opened the application process for the Farmer Rancher Grant Program, which funds on-farm research, demonstration, and education projects. Past projects have included pest and disease management, quality of life issues, soil health, on-farm energy, production methods, community education, and outreach. Apply by Dec. 8, 2016. See www.northcentralSARE.org/Grants/Our-Grant-Programs/Farmer-Rancher-Grant-Program.

Deadline to Apply for Mentoring Program

Want an experienced farmer to guide your fledgling farm? Want to share your experience with a beginning farmer and ensure sustainable, organic production? Apply now to participate in the 2017 MOSES Farmer-to-Farmer Mentoring Program. The program runs from December 2016 to February 2017 — a bit more than one year. It includes admission to the MOSES Organic Farming Conference in both 2017 and 2018. The application deadline is Oct. 31, 2016. Apply online at mosesorganic.org/mentor-program or call 715-778-5775 to request an application.

New Farmer U

Registration is open for New Farmer U, a weekend training for beginning farmers Oct. 21-23, 2016 at Eagle Bluff Center in Lanesboro, Minn. Experienced organic farmers and ag experts will lead workshops on topics such as soil fertility, post management, and farm machinery. Land access, certification, and business planning are also on the agenda, along with expert-led roundtables. New Farmer U is hosted by the Midwest Organic and Sustainable Education Service, Renewing the Countryside, and Land Stewardship Project. Register and learn more at NewFarmerU.org.

Organic Certification Cost Share

Certified organic producers and handlers can apply now for reimbursement of certification-related expenses from Oct. 1, 2015 to Sept. 30, 2016. Payments may be up to 75 percent of certification costs with a maximum of $750 per scope of certification. Application processes and deadlines differ by state. Contact your state Dept. of Ag. Illinois – Nov. 1

Iowa – Nov. 7

Michigan – Oct. 1

Minnesota – Oct. 31

North Dakota – Nov. 16

South Dakota – Nov. 11

Wisconsin – Nov. 30

Research Symposium Proceedings

Presentation summaries from the January 2016 Organic Agriculture Research Symposium are available online at eorganic.info/node/16778. Topics include organic soil health, seeds and plant breeding, biological controls, biodiversity, economics, and livestock. Several workshops and keynotes also are available on the eOrganic YouTube channel: bit.ly/OARSSummaries.
Cover Crop Survey Results

The fourth annual Cover Crop Survey, conducted by the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program and the Conservation Technology Information Center (CTIC) included responses from more than 2,020 American farmers. Results show a general enthusiasm for cover crops, and a steady rise in acreage planted. The survey also reports an increase of cash crop yields following cover crop plantings. See bit.ly/CoverCropSurvey16.

New Farmer Stories

FamilyFarmed is looking for beginning farmers’ stories to feature through its Growing Young Farmers project. The project provides a platform for young farmers to discuss why they have chosen farming, the opportunities that motivate them, and the challenges. Contact Bob Benenson at bob@familyfarmed.org. Find the first Growing Young Farmers story at goodfoodoneverytable.org.

Beginning Farmer Resources

The Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Beginning and Transitioning Farmer Information website houses the Minnesota Farm Link, which connects land and livestock operations for sale or rent with farmers who are seeking them. It also has beginning and transitioning farmer resources, grants, loans, and financing resources, as well as scholarships provided by the MDA to meet 50% of the cost for beginning farmers to enroll in Farm Business Management education. See www.mda.state.mn.us/protecting/sustainable/mfo/beginning-farmer.

Virtual Conference for Beginning Farmers

The National Farmers Union hosts “Growing for the Future,” a free, online conference for beginning farmers and ranchers Dec. 5-8 from 5 to 8 p.m. EST. The virtual conference will feature farmer-to-farmer webinars, live Q&A, a discussion board, a resource center and free giveaways. See nfu.org/growing-for-the-future.

Non-GMO Seeds

Albert Lea Seed, a family-owned, Minnesota-based company supplying seed to American farms for nearly 100 years, has announced it is transitioning its Viking Seed corn and soybeans line to non-GMO Seeds. See nfu.org/growing-for-the-future.

Food Safety for Produce Farmers

The National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC) has created a report, “Understanding FDA’s FSMA Rule for Produce Farms” to provide guidance on food safety standards farms must follow to minimize the risks of microbial contamination that may occur during the growing, harvesting, packing, and holding fresh produce. The 29-page report is available at sustainableagriculture.net/publications.

Organic Systems Publication


Pollinator Committee in Minnesota

Minnesota Governor Mark Dayton issued an executive order that limits use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which have been shown to be toxic to pollinators. The order also creates a Committee on Pollinator Protection to advise the governor, and directs state agencies on management of public lands to support pollinator health. Farmers are needed to serve on this committee, which will promote statewide collaboration on pollinator protection efforts, raise public awareness of pollinator issues, and review and comment on agency pollinator programs. Apply by Sept. 27, 2016 at www.sos.state.mn.us/media/26589/september-2016-vacancies.pdf.

Organic Research

The Organic Farming Research Foundation has published an analysis of organic research funded by the USDA Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI) and Organic Transitions (ORI) competitive research grant programs funded from 2002-2014. The analysis covers 189 organic agriculture research, education, and extension projects. See orf.org.
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OPPORTUNITIES

Transitioning Grain: If you are in the Midwest with storage for transitioning grain, we would like to talk to you. Midwest Organic Farmer’s Coop, Merle 734-649-7172 merle@midwestorganic.com Anthony; 217-745-2500 anthony@midxtransition.com.